Chapter 9

Learning to Teach for Next-Generation Education:
A Careful Blend of Action and Reflection

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines how pre-service teachers specializing in English Language Teaching (ELT) in secondary schools can learn to teach for Next-Generation Education by developing professional skills that are in line with today and tomorrow’s technology-mediated environments. To face this challenge, some specific CALL-based ELT training combining action and reflection has recently been introduced in the Education Department at Paris-Sorbonne University. In order to examine the specific CALL-based ELT training offered in light of the set objective, its theoretical underpinnings will first be considered. The design and content of a CALL-based ELT course and of an online tutoring module will then be studied. The pre-service teachers’ perception of this CALL-based ELT training will then be explored through the results of online surveys. Conclusions will be drawn from these results and future directions will be outlined.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter sets out to examine how pre-service teachers can learn to teach for next-generation education. The position favored here is one that implies probing into the use of technology for learning and teaching, given that Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has permeated society widely. In fact, the central question today is no longer whether technology should be used or not in education, but rather how to use it effectively (Bertin & Sarré, 2014). This is why further knowledge is needed about the technology training that should be provided to pre-service teachers.
More precisely, this chapter sets out to study how pre-service second language (L2) teachers are prepared to use ICT. It analyzes in particular how pre-service teachers specializing in English Language Teaching (ELT) in secondary education in France, can develop professional skills in a technology-mediated environment, by combining action and reflection. As in many other countries, ICT is now part of the set of core skills that every teacher is expected to develop in France. This is specified in the new list of professional key skills for teachers and educational staff issued in 2013 by the French Ministry for Education (Bulletin Officiel de l’Éducation Nationale, 2013). Therefore, as pre-service teachers enroll in a Master’s program to become fully qualified teachers of English, the objective is not only to enhance their specialist knowledge of English, but also to develop their professional skills, including CALL-related ones. To face this challenge, some specific CALL-based ELT training has recently been introduced in the Education Department at Paris-Sorbonne University. This specific training is part of the two-year Master’s program during which pre-service teachers follow lectures at university (during Year 1 and Year 2) and carry out several placements in secondary schools (for the most part in Year 2). It consists of a CALL-based ELT course, which every pre-service teacher is required to take. Moreover, at the same time as the CALL-based ELT course was implemented, our university set up a new language center named SIAL (Service Interuniversitaire d’Apprentissage des Langues). The SIAL is meant to provide language modules to undergraduate students who specialize in disciplines other than languages. The first module offered to SIAL students was an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) module delivered in blended format (B1 level). When studying on the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), SIAL learners benefit from the mediation of online tutors. This innovative online EFL module was viewed as an extra opportunity to turn pre-service teachers into agents of change for L2 learning and teaching. Therefore, pre-service teachers, though trained for Secondary Education, had the opportunity to teach for the online SIAL course as tutors in their second year in the Master’s program, on a voluntary basis. This experience was considered as extra practicum for them since L2 online tutoring is likely to be useful when teaching at secondary school level as well. Consequently, pre-service teachers were introduced to L2 learning and teaching with the use of technology thanks to the CALL-based ELT course, centered on Secondary Education, and to the extra training some of them received to teach a university-based online course for SIAL students. This extra training experience, however, was not a mandated component for all pre-service teachers in the Master’s program, unlike the CALL-based ELT course, but rather an elective module of the program.

In order to examine the specific CALL-based ELT training offered in light of the set objective, the theoretical underpinnings will first be considered. The design and content of the CALL-based ELT course and of the online tutoring elective module will then be studied. Finally, the pre-service teachers’ perception of this specific CALL-based ELT training will be explored through the results of online surveys. Conclusions will be drawn from these results and future directions will be outlined.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Given the scope of the present study, it is necessary to first consider what research indicates regarding ICT integration in the secondary classroom, as well as regarding pre-service teacher ICT training. It will then be useful to complement these research findings with CALL-related ones.
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